



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Eastern Region Winter Sports Team  
Green Mountain & Finger Lakes,  
White Mountain National Forests

[www.fs.fed.us/r9/gmfl](http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/gmfl)

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File Code: 1950

Date: May 18, 2005

To Interested Persons and Organizations:

The White Mountain National Forest is initiating an environmental analysis process for a proposed ski area project at Loon Mountain Ski Resort (Loon) to modify the authorized improvements to provide trail access to one of their five parking lots (South Mountain parking lot), as well as to homes and condominiums outside the Loon special use permit boundary. When Loon opens the G Lift terrain – located within the South Mountain expansion- they would like to allow guests to ski or snowboard from the G Lift terrain back to the South Mountain parking lot without using the shuttle bus, or to their homes or condominiums.

We are contacting you now because you have indicated an interest in these types of projects. We may also be contacting you now because you live in close proximity to, or may have a particular interest in, the specific location proposed in this project. The intent of this letter is to inform you of the proposal and seek your input.

The enclosed Scoping Report includes the Purpose and Need for the project, the Proposed Action, the Decisions to be Made, and How you can Submit Comments to the Forest Service. The Scoping Report also contains a location map and project map for reference.

If you choose to comment on this proposal, we will need you to submit any thoughts you may have specific to the project no later than Friday June 17, 2005. You will find details on how to comment at the end of the Scoping Report.

Thank you for your interest in the management of the White Mountain National Forest.

Sincerely,

BETH LECLAIR  
District Ranger/Team Leader



**WHITE MOUNTAIN NATIONAL FOREST**  
**SCOPING REPORT**  
**Project Proposal for the South Mountain Return Trail and Base Lands Access Trail**  
**at**  
**Loon Mountain Ski Resort**

## **Introduction**

The White Mountain National Forest is initiating an environmental analysis process for a proposed ski area project at Loon Mountain Ski Resort (Loon) to modify the authorized improvements to provide trail access to one of their five parking lots (South Mountain parking lot) as well as to homes and condominiums outside the Loon special use permit boundary (see figure 2.1). When Loon opens the G Lift terrain – located within the South Mountain expansion- they would like to allow guests to ski or snowboard from the G Lift terrain back to the South Mountain parking lot without using the shuttle bus, and/or directly to their homes and/or condominiums without going through one of the base areas, or having to use the shuttle.

This Report includes the Purpose and Need for the project, the Proposed Action, the Decisions to be Made, and How You Can Submit Comments to the Forest Service.

To get more specific information on this proposed project, you have two options:

- 1) You may access the White Mountain National Forest web site @ <http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/white/>. Here you will find a map showing the proposed trail location at Loon Mountain Ski Resort. This will give you a better idea of location; but if you need more specific information or you do not have access to the internet – go to option 2
- 2) You may contact us directly for more information and to request a copy of the map.
  - **Androscoggin District:**  
Joe Gill @ 603-466-2713, ext 221 ([jgill@fs.fed.us](mailto:jgill@fs.fed.us))

As you review this project proposal, you may find that you have information about the proposed project that you believe has been unavailable or overlooked by the Forest Service, and which may be important to consider in arriving at a decision. If you choose to comment on this proposal, we will need you to submit this information, and any other thoughts you may have specific to the project, to us no later than Friday, June 17, 2005. You will find details on how to comment at the end of this report.

## **Purpose and Need**

Improvements were authorized at Loon in the February 2002 Record of Decision for the *Loon Mountain Ski Resort Development and Expansion Final Environmental Impact Statement*. Loon Mountain Recreation Corporation (LMRC) operates a four-season resort known as Loon Mountain Ski Resort (Loon), a portion of which is under three permits; a 30-year-term Special Use Permit (SUP) authorized under the Occupancy Act of 1915, a 30-year SUP authorized under the Organic Act of 1897, and an annual SUP authorized under the Land and Conservation Act of 1965. These permits are issued and administered by the White Mountain National Forest (WMNF) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (the Forest Service). Loon is located in Lincoln, New Hampshire, which is on the Pemigewasset Ranger District of the WMNF (Fig. 1.1).

LMRC would like to modify the authorized improvements to provide trail access to one of their five parking lots (South Mountain parking lot), which currently requires a 2-mile shuttle bus ride to access Loon's base area, as well as provide trail access to homes and condominiums outside the SUP boundary from the lower portion of Trail 40 (Fig. 2.1).

### Return Trail

Loon presently has approximately 1,700 parking spaces in five separate lots. Four lots are located near the base of Loon. The fifth – and largest – lot is located at the base of South Mountain and contains 600 parking spaces (35% of Loon's parking capacity). On busy weekends, peak holidays, and other high use periods, the four lots near the Loon base area fill quickly. Guests are directed to park in the South Mountain parking lot and take a shuttle bus to the Loon base area. During peak periods, Loon's shuttle buses may make up to 78 total daily trips. When LMRC opens the G Lift terrain – located within the South Mountain expansion – they would like to allow guests to ski or snowboard via a return trail from the G Lift terrain back to the South Mountain parking lot without using the shuttle bus.

### Base Lands Access Trail

When the G-lift and Trail 40 are built, an access trail would allow guests to ski or snowboard from the lower portion of Trail 40, directly to homes and condominiums. When LMRC opens the G Lift terrain, they would like to provide guests, visitors and residents with an additional option for exiting the mountain directly to their homes or condominiums without going through one of the base areas, as well as reduce pressures on parking, traffic and shuttle buses.

At this time, the WMNF is revising its Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP), and this proposal meets the current (1986) Plan's goals and objectives, as well as those being proposed in the revised Plan.

## **Proposed Action**

To meet the Purpose and Need, the White Mountain National Forest would allow LMRC to construct two alpine ski trails within the approved South Mountain expansion area. The Return Trail (Fig. 2.1) would connect Loon's previously approved South Mountain expansion with visitor parking. The Base Lands Access Trail (Fig. 2.1) would connect the lower portion of Trail 40, directly to homes and condominiums outside the SUP boundary.

The Return Trail construction would result in the disturbance (removal of the timber) of approximately 3,680 feet or 5.2 acres (1,907.5 feet or 2.8 acres on NFS lands and 1,773 feet or 2.4 acres on lands owned by Loon) of soil. The trail would be 60 feet wide. Construction activities would involve mechanical removal of stumps and large rocks, grading of surface, as well as installation of drainage ditches, waterbars, and culverts.

The Base Lands Access Trail would make use of an existing cross-country skiing and hiking trail, widening it by approximately fifteen feet and adding snowmaking to it. Widening this trail would result in disturbance (removal of the timber) of approximately .2 of an acre, and would slightly alter the G Lift trail design authorized in the 2002 Record of Decision.

Implementation for both trails would occur during the summer months, when soil conditions are favorable for all soil disturbing activities, and would be completed by Sept 15. All trail construction mitigations (i.e., only a maximum of 600 slope feet of exposed mineral soil will be exposed at one time, grading, seeding and mulching will occur incrementally with construction, etc.) identified in the 2002 Record of Decision would apply.

The proposed Return Trail route would offer the most efficient egress from South Mountain to the South Mountain parking area, while avoiding impacts to wetlands, wildlife and cultural resources located on NFS lands. Approximately half of the proposed trail would take advantage of an old (c1930's) woods road.

The cut trees would be removed by skidder along the route of the proposed trail and landed in the South Mountain base area. Most of the tops and non-merchantable wood would be chipped on site. The timber value would be charged to LMRC and deposited with the Department of Treasury. It is anticipated that no more than ten trees would need to be removed for the Base Area Access Trail, all of which are less than ten inches in diameter.

## **Decisions to be Made**

Based, in part, on your input, on the recommendations of an interdisciplinary team of resource specialists, and on the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, Eastern Region Winter Sports Team Leader, Beth LeClair, as the Responsible Official, will decide:

- The level of analysis necessary to assess and document the environmental effects of this proposed project, which includes determining whether this project meets criteria for categorical exclusion from documentation in an environmental impact statement or

environmental assessment, including an assessment of any extraordinary circumstances (as defined in FSH 1909.15, Chapter 30.3);

- Whether there is sufficient information and analysis to make a decision to implement the proposed project;
- What mitigation measures and monitoring requirements will help assure the proposed project meets 1986 Forest Plan standards and guidelines for all resources; and
- Whether a Forest Plan amendment will be required to accommodate this project.

All or part of this project may be categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) under FSH 1909.15-2004-3, Chapter 31.2-(1): 1. Construction and reconstruction of trails. Under the new regulations for “Notice, Comment, and Appeal Procedures for National Forest System Projects and Activities; Final Rule (36 CFR 215, Code of Federal Regulations)” published June 17, 2003 in the Federal Register, projects that qualify for this categorical exclusion are not eligible for comment and/or appeal following publication of a Decision Memo. As such, this may represent your only opportunity to provide formal comment on this project. Once the level of documentation is determined and the analysis is completed, copies will be mailed to people who submit comments before or during this scoping period and to people who request copies.

### **How You Can Submit Comments**

You may submit your comments to the Forest Service via any one of the following means:

- Mail – send to Sue Howle, Interdisciplinary Team Leader, Eastern Region Winter Sports Team, 99 Ranger Road Rochester, VT 05767
- FAX – send attn: Sue Howle @ 802-767-4777
- Phone – contact Sue Howle @ 802-767-4261 x543 (M-F, 8am-4:30pm)
- E-mail – [showle@fs.fed.us](mailto:showle@fs.fed.us)

Comments must be submitted by close of business (5:00pm EST) on Friday, June 17, 2005 and should include the following information:

- Your name, address, and, if possible, your phone number and e-mail address
- The title of the project to which your comment is in response

The purpose of soliciting your comments during this scoping period is to collect additional information and to identify any unresolved issues regarding the proposal. To make your comments responsive they should be site-specific where possible, and address the list of questions on the opening page of this letter. Be sure to provide supporting rationale for your comments, including concerns about environmental effects of the proposed project.

Please be aware that your name, address and comments will become part of the public record and may be available for public inspection. If this is a concern, please contact Sue Howle at your earliest convenience.